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FCC Mail Room

James R. Fouts - Mayor

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

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April 4, 2014

Mr. Tom Wheeler
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

RE: Proposed Comcast- Time Warner Buy-out

Dear Mr. Wheeler,

In reviewing Comcast-Time Warner merger, I urge the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to deny the merger or, at a minimum, establish conditions that give citizens meaningful protection from anti-competitive behavior.

As Mayor of the City of Warren, the third largest city in Michigan, I am opposed to any action that will create a monopoly over the internet, broadband and/or cable market. It is my strong belief that only one technology giant will not serve the consumers and will ultimately lead to higher prices and a decline in product quality, service and choice.

This nation relies upon advanced technological communication products and networks. The proposed Comcast transaction may be supported with claims that it will unleash advanced technology; however, the very real threat is that those benefits will be short-lived, and ultimately overshadowed by the elimination of competition and product growth. With only one conglomerate controlling access to valuable resources, competitive providers will not have a level-playing field. The extinguishment of competition does not encourage product development, service and affordable pricing. Without incentives that competition creates and sustains, the technological vitality of our future is at issue.

Warren, Michigan is among the communities in the United States that has created and maintained a competitive environment for cable service. Warren residents now have the choice to do business among three cable/video service providers. (This is in addition to direct satellite.) Although Warren is not unique in that cable rates have continued to rise, in spite of competition, our competitive environment has led to improved customer service, better pricing offers to retain customers, senior citizen discount offers, and, most importantly, has provided local consumers with the freedom to choose among several providers. We have also experienced lower rate increases than communities without competition.

The competitive environment has also served the community as a whole. Comcast and other cable providers are more committed to community efforts, and are assisting local schools and community groups, more responsive to customer service concerns, and are more sensitive to public and private property concerns when laying fiber and working in rights-of-way. These benefits of competition serve the public interest in significant ways.

The proposed merger gives every indication of creating the functional equivalent of a monopoly. The prospect of one cable giant with the power to override and eliminate competitive cable providers will not serve the public interest or long-term interests of our citizens. **This is especially critical in light of the escalating cable bills that are reported to have grown at more than twice the rate of inflation**

It is my understanding that the federal government serves a limited role in regulating cable rates and services, but exercises much more control over anti-competitive influences. In the Comcast – Time Warner Cable review, the FCC and FTC will have an outstanding opportunity to preserve the competitive marketplace, and protect the cable, broadband and internet consumer.

I urge strict scrutiny of the proposed merger so that the marketplace continues to remain competitive, and consumers may continue to have choice among their internet, broadband and cable/video service providers and products. I urge the Federal Communications Commission to oppose the proposed Comcast-Time Warner merger without enforceable commitments to affordable prices and fair business practices.

Please share this communication with the other FCC commissioners. If you have any questions, or if I could provide any further information, please feel free to call me at (586) 574-4520.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James R. Fouts". The signature is stylized with a large "J" and "F".

JAMES R. FOUTS

Mayor
City of Warren, Michigan